United Nations E/CN.6/2017/NGO/221

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
7 November 2016

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-first session
13-24 March 2017
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Family Educational Services Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

16-19503 (E) 111116

Please recycle

Statement

In accordance with the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the priority theme "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work" carries significant meaning for Pakistan civil society. In the context of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (E/CN.6/2015/3), relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1), Family Education Services Foundation and American Pakistan Foundation, recognize that this past year has been positive for gender equality in Pakistan as civil society and government have worked together in partnerships.

As a signatory to the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Pakistan has demonstrated a certain political will, at both national and provincial governments as per the Concluding Observations from Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Universal Periodic Review monitoring bodies to uphold and advance women's rights, through the passing of key pro-women legislation by the government, programmes and setting up women and human right commissions. However, much more work remains to ensure equitable gender development.

The overall gender equality indicators remain weak for the country as Pakistan ranks second lowest (144 out of 145 countries) on the Global Gender Equality Index Report of 2015. UN-Women Pakistan highlights that women and girls' education enrolment suffers with a 48% literacy rate; the gap of 11 million women in voter registration compared to men leads to their further exclusion from the democratic process and citizenry; and women's health indicators remain low as 270 women of 100,000 suffer maternal deaths.

Although Pakistan parliament is comprised of 17% women parliamentarians, women still lag behind in the economic sphere as women in senior management positions and on corporate boards remain a minority.

We call on United Nations Member States to adopt legal measures and policies to increase the participation of women in all sectors of society, such as capacity building programmes, higher education and other incentives to speed women's representation in institutions, economic enterprises and social organizations. And we urge the establishment of democratic processes to ensure women's increased participation and candidates in elections.

One of the main challenges that continue to face women in Pakistan is that of safety, a fundamental responsibility of the state. Public spaces often lack security measures that lead to the inability and or difficulty for women to engage in the informal or formal workforce, access education and participate in society as leaders and equal citizens. Weak security measures also exist in the context of violence at home. UN-Women Pakistan reports that domestic violence statistics reach as high as 70% on the national level. We agree with UN-Women Global Strategic Plan (GSP 2011-2013) that prioritizes women's political participation and violence against women in electoral and decision-making.

Therefore, we call on United Nations Member States to recognize the importance of the creation of safe public spaces and a conducive environment for women to exercise social, political and economic rights without the fear of violence and harassment.

We call on United Nations Member States to adopt legal measures to prevent gender-based violence. These measures should include stronger penalties for offenders, easing legal access and redress for victims, enforcement of child-protection laws, establishment of support and rehabilitation programmes, and provision of funding for the collection of data on violence against women.

We call on member states to recognize the importance of education, specifically for marginalized segments of society, such as those who are disabled, in the context of eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development goals.

To ensure that women and girls have access to education, and to diminish the impact that violence and poverty have on attainment, United Nations Member States must:

- Provide safe learning environments and public spaces;
- Improve access to quality education, including vocational training;
- Disperse equitable education funding and disability training resources and vocational development (including job training initiatives for marginalized women with low literacy and numeracy skills); and
- Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls, especially the disabled.

Family Education Services Foundation with America Pakistan Foundation, our United Nations collaborative partner, urge Pakistan and other United Nations Member States to continue their leadership role in further implementation of gender-based policies that encourage and support women's empowerment and their link to sustainable development.